

EXHIBIT A

PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

**GENERAL POWER OF ATTORNEY
TO PROSECUTE APPLICATIONS BEFORE
THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Assignee Name and Address: NGK Insulators, Ltd.
2-56, Suda-cho, Mizuho-ku, Nagoya-city
Aichi-prefecture, 467-8530 Japan

appoints the patent practitioners associated with Oliff & Berridge, PLC Customer
Number 25944 to represent it before the United States Patent and Trademark Office in
connection with any and all U.S. patent applications assigned to the above-named assignee.

The undersigned is authorized to act on behalf of the assignee.

**ALL CORRESPONDENCE IN CONNECTION WITH THIS APPLICATION SHOULD
BE SENT TO OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC, CUSTOMER NO. 25944, TELEPHONE
(703) 836-6400.**

October 28, 2004
Date

Takafumi Hochi
Signature

Typed Name: Takafumi Hochi

Title: General Manager, Legal Affairs &
Intellectual Property Department